Sharptown Bridge
Maryland Route 313 spanning the Nanticoke River
Sharptown Vicinity
Dorchester County
~~Wicomico County~~
Maryland

HAER No. MD-52

HAER
MD,
10-SHATO.V,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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Location:	Over the Nanticoke River on Maryland State Route 313 Sharptown, Dorchester and Wicomico Counties, Maryland UTM: 18.437173.4266303 Quad: Sharptown, Maryland
Date of Construction:	1912; rehabilitated in 1931, 1952, and 1976
Current Owner:	State Highway Administration Maryland Department of Transportation 707 North Calvert Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Current Use:	Vehicular traffic. Swing span accommodates navigation on the river
Significance:	The Sharptown Bridge was the first bridge built entirely under the control of the State Roads Commission. It is the first and only bridge at this location.
Project Information:	The Sharptown Bridge is to be demolished in 1986 with funds provided by the Federal Highway Administration. Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, mitigative documentation was prepared by the Maryland State Highway Administration, Bureau of Bridge Design.
Edited and Transmitted by:	Jean P. Yearby, HAER, 1987

At Sharptown, Maryland, Route 313 crosses the Nanticoke River in a roughly north-south direction. The site was a ferry crossing at least from the 1750s, when the area was first settled until the increase in automobile traffic in the first part of the twentieth century made a bridge crossing necessary.

The Maryland State Roads Commission (SRC) was formed in 1908 in response to the automobile traffic increase. Because Maryland has so many waterway crossings, it was important for the SRC to control bridge building. At the time of its inception and during its early years, the SRC either purchased from private companies or assumed control from other agencies several bridges already in existence or under construction.

In 1910, the State Legislature passed a Public Highways Act, which specifically provided for funding $35,000 for the construction of a bridge at Sharptown. The SRC Department of Surveys prepared plans and specifications and awarded the contract for the bridge on July 31, 1911, to the Roanoke Iron and Bridge Company of Roanoke, Virginia. The Roanoke company was, at that time, a prolific designer of iron and steel truss bridges in Virginia and surrounding States.

The bridge is a steel truss swing span, with a 200-foot (±) swing span and two 70-foot (±) Pratt trusses. The two-mirror image Pratt trusses are connected centrally by a portion of a Camelback truss. The Pratt trusses are of three panels each, with no secondary diagonals in the innermost panels. The inner inclined end posts are in the position of diagonals for the Camelback, which has one central complete panel rising above the top chords of the Pratts. Over the roadway, between the two central panels of the Camelback, is a platform which supports the bridge tender's house, a situation which is rare in Maryland. All connections are riveted. The swing span was operated by hand crank when the bridge was first built, and may have been the last large drawbridge in the State of Maryland to be operated in this manner. An electric motor was installed in 1913.

The bridge has seven fixed spans, six at 75 feet (±) and one at 18 feet (±). The roadway wide is 17 feet, six inches (±) and the vertical clearance over main channel when closed is 10feet (±). The total length of structure is 660 feet, 8 inches (±).

The bridge resembles in elevation a double track rim-bearing railway span designed by the Erie Railroad Company in 1900. The design was revised in June 1905 and built in 1907. Several specifications of the Sharptown Bridge differ from this model. Additional tension members were added to the outer two panels in each truss and the central panel supporting the tender's house. The load configuration became center-bearing instead of rim-bearing, possibly because of the influence of C. C. Schneider, Consulting Engineer of the American Bridge Company, who was responsible for the center-bearing type in American bridge design.

Jesse Dashiell Price, State Senator from the Eastern Shore, was largely credited with having the bridge built. He sponsored the Public Highways Act in the legislature and fought for its passage. On July 21, 1910, 2,000 citizens of Sharptown and the surrounding areas congregated to honor him for his efforts, giving a banquet in his honor.

The bridge was completed in November 1912, at a total cost of $72,539. The bridge configuration today is largely unchanged except for several replacement members and carries a weight limitation.